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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author attempts to show that staff development is of crucial importance for successful implementation of an individualized instruction program. The main body of the paper is devoted to a discussion of a staff development planning format in which four concept clusters having to do with individualized instruction are discussed. The first cluster concerns the learner -- what is believed about him, the way he learns, his decisionmaking ability, his motivation, and his ability to be self-directing; the second, what constitutes the learning environment for individualized instruction; the third, the instructional program; and the fourth, the teacher. A discussion on assessing program demands to determine staff requirements concludes the presentation. (Author/DN)

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THE CONTEXT OF INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION AND SOME EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS *

(Special Session for ASCD-1973)

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

by Edith E. Grimsley

Dr. Jim Eisele has discussed the levels of individualization, and indicated the decision-making dimensions. Dr. Les Bishop has developed a management alternatives matrix to show all possible combinations of grouping procedures, pacing, utilization of materials, and standards.

In the next few minutes, I would like to direct our attention to implementation considerations and more specifically, to planning for staff development to implement individualization. We give a great deal of lip service to the importance of staff competency in paving the way for and insuring the success of educational innovations. We say, "In the final analysis it was the teacher, or it is the staff that made for the success of such and such a program." We imply that said teacher or staff possessed the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to implement the program.

In recent years, several national curriculum projects recognizing the necessity of staff training and wishing to build into their programs all possible insurances for success, developed staff training components and provided consultant help for staff development.

Occasionally an analysis of an innovation that failed is reported in the literature. In such cases it is not uncommon to find lack of attention to staff development reported as a barrier to implementation. One such case study is reported by Neal Gross and his associates in Implementing Organizational Innovations: A Sociological Analysis of

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Planned Educational Change. I cite this example because the attempted innovation, the teacher as a catalytic role model in an elementary school is not unlike individualized instruction in its desired pupil outcomes and expected teacher behaviors, that is, responsibility for learning and self-direction on the part of learners and the teacher in the role of guide and facilitator. The five barriers were:

(1) teachers' lack of clarity about the innovation
(2) teachers' lack of skills and knowledge needed to conform to the new role model
(3) the unavailability of required instructional materials
(4) the incompatibility of organizational arrangements with the innovation
(5) lack of staff motivation

I would submit that of the five, at least three of the barriers could have been directly dealt with through a staff development program.

Before I proceed further in this discussion of staff development, perhaps I should define it. Staff development, for the purposes of this discussion, I will define as those planned activities which provide for the growth and development of staff members and which are designed to have positive influence on the implementation of individualized instruction. Said differently, the target in staff development as I have defined it is that group of teachers, administrators, supervisors, librarians, counselors, etc. who have major instructional or support responsibilities for the implementation of individualized instruction and the objective is to plan activities which will improve the competence of the professional staff members in areas which have impact on successful implementation.

Before proposing a format for staff development planning, I should like to comment with regard to organizational change. Schools are complex social organizations. Too often we have tinkered with the curriculum or with buildings or with the staffing pattern and have ignored the effects of our tinkering on other parts of the system until these parts demanded our attention. If we have learned anything from our problems and failures, it should be that changes in one subsystem have consequences for other subsystems and for the system as a whole. A major change such as individualized instruction requires not only that considerable attention be given the instructional subsystem but also the support subsystem.

The literature of planned organizational change stresses the importance of the change agent in initiating and implementing an innovation. As I discuss staff development, an assumption which I make is that someone in the district will assume leadership for initiating change and that the designated individual will have been chosen because of his strategic position, his personal qualities, his knowledge and skills as a change agent, and ahis commitment to the innovation.

Despite the fact that there is disagreement in the literature regarding the degree of involvement in decision making required of those affected by change, I personally favor extensive involvement. Therefore, as I discuss planning for staff development, I make an assumption that all instructional and support personnel who will have responsibilities in the implementation of individualized instruction will be actively involved in assessing needs, formulating staff development objectives, selecting individual and group

activities designed to fulfill objectives, and evaluating both process and outcomes of staff development.

I mention individual and group activities because I believe that if you endorse individualized instruction for youngsters and the underlying philosophy of individualization, you, of necessity, must also recognize individual differences among teachers as to competencies and needs and that because you recognize these differences, your staff development program planning and implementation will be different.

With these assumptions in mind, let us turn our attention to the staff development planning format. You may wish to refer to the handout at this time. On the left, I have listed four concept clusters associated with individualized instruction. First there is a cluster of concepts having to do with the learner--what we believe about him, the way he learns, about his ability to make decisions about his learning, about his motivation, about his ability to be self-directing. Some of these concepts usually appear as goals in an individualized program.

There is another cluster of concepts about what constitutes the learning environment for individualized instruction. These concepts have to do with specification of learning tasks and the pacing of the tasks; the way we organize tasks in time and space, the relationship of pupils and teachers and "things" and the way information is processed.

A third cluster of concepts associated with individualized instruction characterizes the instructional program. Whether we are describing programed materials, learning activity packages, individual prescriptions or a teacher's

first attempt to break the lock-step movement through "grade level" expectations, we have come to associate the specification of objectives, availability of alternatives in the selection, organization, and packaging of content, a variety in the choice of learning resources, and an individual evaluation scheme with individualization.

Finally, associated with individualized instruction there is a cluster of concepts about the teacher. Most of these have to do with diversification of the teaching role, with viewing the teacher as more than an information-giver, as a personal communicator rather than a mass communicator. Implied in the characterization of the teacher in individualized instruction is a capacity to change, flexibility, and openness to new modes of behavior.

Rare is the case where in operation individualized instruction encompasses all of the concepts in each of these clusters. As Dr. Bishop has indicated there are a great many possibilities for achieving a degree of individualization. Therefore, as leadership persons in a district begin to plan for the implementation of their "version" of individualized instruction, they need to identify the concepts which characterize their program. These concepts may take the form of program goals . . . Whether stated as goals or as concepts which are a part of the district's philosophy, these eventually have to be translated into program demands. For example, if one of the goals of the program is that of self-direction on the part of students, then among the program demands will be that data be available to the student which allows him to make intelligent decisions.

These data would include data about himself and about the instructional program. For every goal or for every concept of individualization to be implemented, translation into program demands or requirements is a must.

A kind of next step (if the task is viewed as a linear one) is an analysis of the program demands to determine staff requirements necessary for implementation. To use the previous example of a program demand, making data available to pupils would require that the instructional staff be able to interpret the program and offer alternatives for next steps and would require that the counselors be able to interpret tests results for student use. In the cases of both instructional and supportive staff, providing adequate data to students in usable form requires knowledge, skills and an attitude about the appropriateness of decision-making as a student activity.

At this point, the assessment of program demands and staff requirements together with knowledge of staff competencies become input for analysis which reveals the consequences for staff development. To use the example again, to the extent that the teachers and counselors lack the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide the data for decision-making, the consequences for staff development emerge. For example, teachers may need greater understanding of the scope and sequence of existing instructional packages; or they may need better diagnostic instruments; or skill in diagnosing specific learning difficulties; or counselors may need a better feedback system, interviewing skills, or skill in using a wider variety of data gathering instruments.

Once the consequences for staff development are spelled out, the challenge of translating these into objectives, of designing appropriate activities and evaluation measures, presents itself. The challenge is even greater if one remembers that in a program structured to accommodate individual differences, staff members will present varying needs for and enthusiasm in staff development activities. I believe that the systematic approach which I have suggested is possible in practice and that when applied will result in more effective staff development activities.

INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FORMAT

KEY CONCEPT CLUSTERS IN INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION	ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM DEMANDS AND STAFF REQUIREMENTS						CONSEQUENCES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT*
	Instructional			Supportive			
	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES	
I. Learner							
A. Knowledge of his needs, abilities, learning style, etc.							
B. Involvement of him in decision-making							
C. Self-direction							
II. Learning Environment							
A. Differentiated learning tasks							
B. Differentiation in time allowed to complete learning tasks							
C. Organization of time, space, and personnel							
D. Complementary teacher-pupil roles							
E. Communication							
III. Instructional Program							
A. Specification of objectives							
B. Selection, organization, and packaging of content							
C. Variety of teaching/ learning resources							
D. Teaching/learning strategy							
E. Evaluation							

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FORMAT, CONTINUED

IV. Teacher A. Diversification of role 1. Facilitator 2. Diagnostician/ Prescriber 3. Manager 4. Monitor B. Change orientation								

*Staff Development Program Characteristics
Consequences are translated into objectives.
Appropriate activities are selected.
Feedback and evaluation procedures are built in.
Participants are involved in assessing, planning, and implementation.

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